Strategic planning nears the goal line

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What should the A. B. Freeman School of Business look like in five years?

That was the central question posed to a large, diverse group of faculty, staff, students, alumni and employers in September 2012. Now, seven months later, the group—known collectively as the Strategic Planning Leadership Team—is preparing to release its findings to the entire Freeman community.



> Since last September, a large, diverse group of faculty, staff, students, alumni and employers has been working to develop a new strategic plan for the Freeman School.

Freeman School Dean Ira Solomon assembled the team last summer to begin the difficult task of drafting a new strategic plan for the Freeman School. With more than 50 participants representing all the major stakeholder groups and professional

support from Academic Leadership Associates, a nationally respected firm specializing in strategic planning for higher education, the effort is the most inclusive, most comprehensive strategic planning process in school history.

“I think we all share the view that it’s critically important for this school to determine what it wants to be on a goingforward basis,” says Solomon. “There’s a widespread recognition that we don’t have the scale to be everything to everybody, so this is the time where we’ve got to figure out where we’re going and how we’re going to get there.”

“It’s something that needs to be done,” adds Albin Soares (MBA ’13), president of the Graduate Business Council. “The business school has been around a long time, but the market has changed dramatically. Where do we fit in? What do we do well? Where do we go from here? That’s what we’re trying to figure out in these strategic planning sessions.”

The planning process is actually part of a larger initiative being undertaken at the university level. Seven years after Hurricane Katrina, Tulane is embarking on a major strategic planning effort designed to move the university beyond recovery and into the next stage in its growth. As part of that process, the provost’s office asked each academic unit to develop its own strategy document that will feed into the master plan, ensuring that key school priorities get the resources and support they need from the university’s central administration.



The Strategic Planning Leadership Team is in the final stages of a preparing a plan to guide the Freeman School over the next five years.

For the Freeman School, the process couldn’t come at a more critical time. Across the nation, business schools are facing increased competition from a wide variety of sources, including online programs, for-profit universities and institutions in Asia and Europe. At the same time, prospective students are becoming more demanding consumers, increasingly questioning the value of traditional business school offerings. Interest in the two-year, full-time MBA, long considered the flagship program at most business schools, has declined for five straight years, according to data from the Graduate Management Admission Council.

“If we are focused as we have been for a number of years on a strong MBA program, expecting that to continue, that’s not going to happen,” says Business School Council member Jerry Greenbaum (BBA ’62). “That’s just not where graduate education is going in the future, so we need to clarify where it is we want to go and what it is we want to do.”

Since the process kicked off in September, the Strategic Planning Leadership Team has spent hundreds of hours studying the management education environment and developing five-year goals for the Freeman School along with strategies to achieve those goals and metrics to measure outcomes.

“By collecting all the inputs from the various constituencies and then organizing that input around a clear vision of where we’re trying to go as a school, you get clarity on what you’re trying to get done, but you also get the buy-in, which I think is critical,” says Business School Council member Jay Lapeyre (MBA/JD ’76). “It’s a terrific process.”